

Remarks

The present application includes claims 19-25 and 27. Claims 19-25 and have been rejected by the Examiner. By this Response, claims 19 and 27 have been amended. Claims 1-18 and 26 are cancelled.

Claim Amendments

Claim 19 has been amended to specify that the annunciator is represented by an array of illuminating elements. Additionally, as amended, the controller of claim 19 causes one or more of the array of illuminating elements to be illuminated in a predetermined first pattern and implements the annunciator through illumination of one or more of the array of illuminating elements in a predetermined second pattern different from the first pattern. The first and second patterns are illuminated according to a plurality of states associated with the bill acceptor. The controller controls the plurality of states associated with the bill acceptor. Further, an alert regarding a malfunctioning bill acceptor is generated so that a patron at the gaming machine is not disturbed in game play at the gaming machine. The Applicant submits that these limitations are not found in the cited art of record.

Similarly, independent claim 27 has been amended to specify that the gaming machine includes an annunciator represented by an array of illuminating elements. Additionally, the annunciator is implemented through illumination of one or more of the array of illuminating elements in a predetermined second pattern following a predetermined first pattern of illumination wherein the first and second patterns are illuminated according to a plurality of states associated with the bill acceptor. Further,

the method provides that the activator continues to operate for the duration that the bill acceptance rate is below the predetermined threshold so that a patron at the gaming machine is not disturbed in game play at the gaming machine. The Applicant submits that these limitations are not found in the cited art of record.

Claim Rejections

Claims 19-25 and 27 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hand (U.S. Pat. Appl. Pub. No. 2002/0125627) in view of Winters (Provisional Appl. No. 60/337,409, published as U.S. Pat. Appl. Pub. No. 2003/0111316 and issued as U.S. Patent No. 7,014,029) and further in view of Juds (U.S. Patent No. 6,564,997). For at least the following reasons, the Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection.

As the Examiner points out, the Hand '627 publication fails to disclose first and second counters and accepting bills at the same rate. Additionally, as previously discussed, the Examiner correctly identified that the Hand '627 publication does not disclose detecting when a bill acceptance rate drops below a predetermined threshold. Instead, the Hand '627 publication discusses indicating other statuses of the bill acceptor, including "note box full", "transport path jammed" and the denomination of the last money item inserted. The bill acceptance rate of a bill acceptor is of a different nature to the types of information that are taught in the Hand '627 publication. The types of status information that are taught in the Hand '627 publication relate to when the bill acceptor is completely inoperable due to being full or jammed, or in the case of the note indicator, reporting normal operation of the bills acceptor. The indicator for these conditions would

therefore be activated immediately when the condition is detected. This is in contrast to activating the annunciator when a minimum threshold for bill acceptance rate over plurality of bill insertions has been passed.

The Winters `409 provisional, which is in fact related to coins rather than bills, halts activity at the gaming machine when a faux or false *coin* is detected. See, e.g., paragraph [0046]. The Winters `409 provisional makes no mention of any bill acceptor or bill evaluation with respect to bill acceptance rate. In fact, Winters is concerned with faux coin identification rather than operation and condition of a gaming machine coin acceptor, let alone a bill acceptor. As in paragraph [0019], highlighted by the Examiner, the coin-counting machine can halt a transaction and require authorized personnel to intervene at the coin-counting machine *before* the person providing the coins can receive value for his or her coins. See, e.g., paragraph [0019] (emphasis added).

The Juds `997 patent, introduced by the Examiner in the present action, describes a tilt mechanism whereby the *coin* acceptor will *self-inhibit* upon detection of fraudulent activity. See, e.g., col. 3, lines 24-30. Juds uses an electronic security key for exchange of electronic data with an electronic coin acceptor circuit. See, e.g., Abstract. Furthermore, the Juds `997 patent discusses the use of one counter – a simple up/down counter – rather than a first counter and second counter as recited in the presently pending claims. See, e.g., col. 10, lines 55-65. In the pending claims, separate counters are used to track bill acceptance and bill rejection. In Juds, based on the up/down counter, the system may convey, via a network, that the machine is in a tilt condition and is inhibited from use. See, e.g., col. 10, line 66 – col. 11, line 11.

As evidenced from the Examiner's remarks and the additional comments above, the three references relied upon in the present rejection of pending claims 19-25 and 27 fail to disclose, whether taken alone or in combination, all of the elements of independent claims 19 and 27, as well as claims 20-25, which depend from claim 19. Such a combination, setting aside any confusion between coin acceptors and bill acceptors, fails to determine a bill acceptance rate and identify malfunction of the bill acceptor itself, rather than identifying a false or counterfeit coin. Additionally, the combination fails to teach or suggest an annunciator represented by an array of illuminating elements illuminated in a pattern according to bill acceptor state. The combination also fails to teach or suggest a controller that generates an alert regarding a malfunctioning bill acceptor so that patrons are not disturbed in game play at the gaming machine.

Thus, for at least these reasons, the Applicant respectfully submits that claims 19-25 and 27 should be allowable over the cited art of record.

Conclusion

The Applicant respectfully submits that the present application is in condition for allowance and a Notice of Allowability is respectfully solicited. If the Examiner has any questions or the Applicant can be of any assistance, the Examiner is invited and encouraged to contact the Applicant at the number below.

The Commissioner is authorized to charge any additional fees or credit overpayment to the Deposit Account of MHM, Account No. 13-0017.

Respectfully submitted,

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